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By Staff Sgt. Karima Turner

Alaska Army National Guard rescues three lost snowmachiners

CAMP DENALI, Alaska – The Alaska Army National Guard, using a Black Hawk helicopter, successfully found three lost snowmachiners near White Mountain and brought them to safety Monday.

According to the 11th Air Force Rescue Coordination Center, the snowmachiners had been traveling from White Mountain to Nome and lost their way after traveling for approximately six hours. The snowmachiners activated a Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) for help.

The Alaska State Troopers were notified of the PLB activation and sent a ground party to the coordinates, but because of weather and location, the ground party had to turn back. At 8 a.m. Feb. 27, Troopers in Nome requested support from the Rescue Coordination Center, which tasked the Alaska Army National Guard's 207th Aviation, also based out of Nome, in rescuing the three snowmachiners.

At 10:57 a.m., the 207th Aviation launched a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter to the location of the lost snowmachiners and found them to be in a hypothermic state.

Guardsmen from the 207th Aviation promptly loaded the snowmachiners into the UH-60 Black Hawk and transported them to the Nome Airport where they were picked up by ambulance and taken to the Norton Sound Health Corporation for medical treatment.

"We used the 207th Aviation out of Nome because they were the closest and the most capable for this scenario," said Tech. Sgt. Jeff Schaezlein, 11th Air Force Rescue Coordination Center controller. "Timeliness is critical to the survival of people in conditions such as this and having the coordinates from the PLB was vital because when the 207th reached the snowmachiners, they had already become hypothermic and that is something that could be life threatening with prolonged exposure."

The Alaska Army National Guard was awarded three saves for this mission.

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